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ABSTRACT

A needs assessment survey was conducted to help determine and create a faculty development program that would best meet the needs of the Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) community. The topics and themes of the previous year's professional development workshops, presentations, and seminars were listed and reviewed. A survey was mailed to faculty in the spring of 1997. This survey included information and questions to help faculty list the types of topics they wanted scheduled for professional development. Themes that matched the professional development areas used for faculty promotion, tenure, and evaluation were included as a guide to an awareness that a distribution of topics across all areas of faculty development was needed. These themes (instruction, scholarly activity, and service) also reflected the mission of the university. Results from the survey suggested that the faculty had an interest in training in the area of instructional computing (technology), along with six other categories or themes (instruction, assessment, professional activities, learning styles, health and wellness, and service). It is recommended that institutions of higher education make a cooperative effort between faculty, staff, and administration to plan professional development opportunities, and that all perspectives be considered during the development process. (AEF)

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Faculty Development and Instructional Computing

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During this era of accountability, institutions of higher education share the common concern of how to present themselves as effective and efficient places of learning. Public scrutiny of academic programs, research projects, faculty workloads, and overall performance has led colleges and universities to take a closer look at how they are using and developing their resources. The use and development of resources is often a crucial factor when making decisions for financial allocations or applying for external funding (Weber, Engle, & Knaub, 1995). Therefore, institutions of higher education, must create plans of action to effectively use, develop, and expand the resources that they have.

One of the most important resources in a college or university is the faculty. The faculty plays many different roles in the education process. They provide instruction, research, and service. All three areas of activity are vital to institutional and community programs at the local, national, and international levels. Because the faculty is so important to the survival and growth of institutions of higher education and other communities, it is essential that programs of professional development opportunities be made accessible to the faculty. A faculty development plan should include professional activities for individual, instructional, curriculum, and organizational development (Jussawalla, 1990).

There are many factors to consider when planning a program for faculty development. Staff development can be systematic and incidental. Institutions may consider the type of professional development plan that is created such as: (a) the management centered type of plan determines what instructors do over a period of time; (b) the instructor centered type lets the individual plan for personal improvement in an educational environment; and (c) a partnership type of plan that includes input from both the management and individuals (Ediger, 1996).

A three dimensional approach to planning programs may be most effective. The first dimension is based on the amount of experience that the individual faculty members possess. The second dimension describes faculty roles which can include instruction, scholarship, creativity, service, or personal growth. The third dimension deals with the organizational level at which the development opportunities are targeted. Opportunities can be offered to individual faculty members, particular units, the academic profession, and the non-academic community (Menges, 1990).

No matter what type of opportunity, program, or approach is used, each institution should create a plan for faculty development that is successful at meeting their unique needs. Successful faculty development programs provide training that will provoke, stimulate, and guide educators to use and integrate new concepts (Imants and Tillema, 1995). Faculty must be given the opportunity to acquire materials, skills, and ideas that they can use for their own professional growth. These opportunities must be accessible, timely, pragmatic, and easily adaptable in order to be effective.

Most faculty/professional development in higher education revolves around the premise that faculty responsibilities are in three areas, teaching, service, and research. Therefore, faculty and college administrators may need to agree on and consider some of the following as key development areas for faculty:

1. Vitalizing students' interest in learning by using exciting teaching techniques including technological media.
2. Creating assessment techniques with the goal of improving teaching and learning.
3. Using techniques for teaching critical thinking and developing creativity in students.
4. Increasing skills for mentoring and advising students.
5. Forming an educational environment that includes instructional computing techniques such as on-line instruction, where quality of time may be as important as quantity of time spent in instruction.
6. Increasing one's knowledge of how to use technological tools for instructional purposes.
7. Synthesizing past experiences with students with new instructional strategies.
8. Developing skills in the ethical use of new technologies.

The primary purpose of this paper is to share the experience of conducting a needs assessment survey to help determine and create a faculty development program that would best meet the needs of the Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) community. Eastern Kentucky University is a regional university with approximately 15,000 students.

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This institution of higher education honors a tradition of providing excellent undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs. All nine colleges participate in the development and governance of the teacher education programs. Teacher education is a university function which includes all of the faculty, staff, and services. Therefore, it is vital to offer a faculty development program that meets the needs of the entire university community yet still focuses on the trends and issues concerning teacher education, especially in the area of instructional computing.

It was determined that the planning goals for such a program should include systematic and incidental opportunities. Planning was to include experience, faculty, and organizational dimensions. And, the development process would be a partnership plan that considered both management centered and instructor centered types of information. In order to meet these goals, faculty input was essential. To obtain the desired information from the faculty, a needs assessment was conducted. This assessment instrument elicited data from the faculty about their desired types of professional training topics. This paper will provide information about the procedure used to conduct the faculty needs assessment survey, a description of the survey results, and information about how these results were used to create a faculty development opportunities program for the academic year of 1997/98.

Procedure

The topics and themes of the previous years professional development workshops, presentations, and seminars were listed and reviewed. The list of these topics was acquired through studying the scheduled events of the 1996/97 academic year as well as the suggested topics that were generated at a faculty breakfast conducted in April, 1996. Faculty were invited to attend a breakfast meeting were ideas about faculty development were exchanged. These ideas were organized, compiled, and given to the office of the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs and Research.

The best way to discover what the faculty wants and needs to learn in the area of instructional computing skills is to ask them. Information will be relevant and the faculty can feel ownership in the planning process. In order to provide the opportunity for faculty to become involved in the process of planning a program for faculty development for the academic year of 1997/98, a survey was mailed in the early Spring of 1997. This survey included information and questions to help faculty list the type of topics they wanted scheduled for professional development. Themes that matched the professional development areas used for faculty promotion, tenure, and evaluation were included as a guide to an awareness that a distribution of topics across all areas of faculty development was needed. These themes (instruction, scholarly activity, and service) also reflect the mission of the university. The following information was provided on a survey form entitled Faculty Development Opportunities Needs Assessment[1] and distributed to each faculty member.

The Office of the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs and Research has begun to plan faculty development opportunities for the 1997-98 academic year. Although it may seem to be very early, faculty input at this time is valuable and necessary to designing opportunities that best meet the needs and schedules of the faculty.

Listed below are three professional development themes (instruction, scholarly activity, and service) as well as input lines for several suggestions per theme. Please provide your name, campus address, campus phone number, and a brief description for each of your faculty development ideas. The list on the back of this page contains a compilation of topics that have been previously offered or suggested. You are invited to use this list as a springboard to create your own ideas or to choose a 1996-97 topic that you think should be repeated.

Lines for each theme were provided for the faculty members name, campus address, phone, and description. At the end of the needs assessment survey, a call for faculty involvement was included as follows:

> "Are there any workshops or other types of faculty development opportunities that you would like to host or present? Please list the titles or topics in the space provided below."

The faculty were asked to complete the survey form and return it by February 21, 1997. A campus address was given.

Survey Results

The topics for professional development that were listed by the faculty were placed into areas of common concern called themes for the purpose of planning development opportunities. These themes and the number of suggested topics were organized as follows: (a) technology with thirteen suggested topics, (b) instruction with six suggested topics, (c) assessment with five suggested topics, (d) professional activities with five suggested topics, (e) learning styles with four suggested topics, (f) health and wellness with four suggested topics, and (g) service with three suggested topics. Results from the survey suggest that the faculty had an interest in training in the area of instructional computing. The specific topics for this theme for professional development were requested as follows: computer assisted instruction, using the computer, database management, desktop publishing, SPSS for Windows, changing library services, Web workshops, how to create a course for the Internet, Internet seminars, instructors guide for teaching by television, PowerPoint, teaching on the Kentucky Telelinking Network (KTLN), and Word Perfect 7.0.

A review of the suggested topics as listed by the faculty revealed that some topics were very general in nature such

as computer assisted instruction or using the computer. Some were somewhat specific to particular type of purpose such as database management, desktop publishing, changing library services, Internet seminars, etc. While other topics were quite program specific such as SPSS for Windows, Word Perfect 7.0, or PowerPoint.

The Faculty Development Opportunities Plan

Information from the needs assessment survey was analyzed and a plan for the faculty development program was developed. This plan had to address budgetary and other major concerns such as: (a) time and duration of the training; (b) types of presenters and speakers; (c) location of the services; and (d) types of formats that would best meet the needs of the participants. When providing training in the area of instructional computing, such variables as time, duration, and location are extremely important to consider because equipment and laboratory space must be reserved for such service. Presenters and speakers must have content knowledge as well as presentation skills that can assist audiences in understanding technical information. The format must meet the need of the skill requested. Short term workshops or long term courses must be carefully selected to meet the time needed to appropriately cover the topic and for the participant to adequately assimilate the information.

After reviewing resources, suggestions, and concerns, faculty development opportunities were offered to the faculty that were diverse in format, location, and schedule. These opportunities included instructional computing training in the form of: (a) short and long term workshops; (b) live satellite Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) presentations; (c) short courses offered by Special Programs; (d) a two-day Instructional Computing Expo; and (e) full term courses. Although a calendar of events was created and distributed to the faculty for the Fall 1997 term, incidental types of opportunities for faculty development were added as the need was identified.

A variety of institutional resources were needed to fund, locate, and equip the faculty development opportunities. These resources included: (a) faculty scholarships; (b) mini-grants for faculty research; (c) training sessions provided by the Academic Computing and Telecommunications Services (ACTS) staff ; (d) training sessions provided by the Extended Programs staff; (e) training and services provided by the Media Resources staff; (f) services provided from the Library Resources staff; (g) services provided by the staff from Special Programs; (h) services provided by faculty and staff willing to share their expertise; and (i) outside speakers and services. It should be noted that faculty with skills in the area instructional computing were invited to participate in the Instructional Computing Expo. This expo was a two day event that invited the university community and education reform partners from the local area schools, community colleges, technical schools, and business community to attend.

Conclusion

The faculty at Eastern Kentucky University were asked to participate in the planning process of a faculty development program for the 1997/98 academic year. Participation was elicited from the faculty by asking them to provide information about the topics they would like presented. A needs assessment survey was used to obtain this information.

Analysis of the data collected from the completed surveys revealed that the faculty requested development opportunities in seven categories or themes. One of theses themes was technology. Further study of the suggested topics for this theme indicated that some topics were very general in nature, some targeted a specific purpose, and some were very program specific.

When planning faculty development in the area of technology, instructional computing topics as listed by the faculty were used. A variety of formats such as workshops, presentations, training sessions, satellite broadcasts, and a two-day expo were planned. Different locations, schedules, speakers, and materials were used to address the variety of faculty needs, experience, motivation, and depth of understanding. A variety of funding and staff resources were used to provide many different types of activities. The faculty were asked to participate as learners and presenters and the calendar of events remained open to requested, incidental activities.

It is recommended that institutions of higher education make a cooperative effort between faculty, staff, and administration to plan professional development opportunities and that all perspectives be considered during the development process. Part of the planning process should include an invitation to all of the members in the university community to actively participate.

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